

# Music:

## Paper Swan delights Jalopy Theater

by Brian Clancy

This was not my first visit to Jalopy Theater. I had attended a Roots and Ruckus session hosted by Feral Foster a couple of months ago. I had already been introduced to the bearded guys wearing dungarees and drinking India Pale Ales from mason jars. A scene that I thought at the time was more familiar with the Appalachian communities of Tennessee or West Virginia and not New York's docklands and waterfront. But, hey, that's what I love about New York! I might encounter anything in this city. Upon entering the Jalopy Theater on this occasion, I met Travis Stewart, a Cleveland native and one of the founders of the Paper Swan Collective. He told me that they started out as just five guys and gals playing music in their Bushwick loft. It grew from there. They started hosting shows regularly and then



Jim Altieri with his fiddle

gradually began playing venues like Jalopy. It's a place they love to play. "We love performing at the Jalopy Theater. There's just such a vibe when you walk through the doors here. You can feel the passion here. You can see it all around you, the instruments for repair, the school, the stage...it's the vision of Jeff and Lynette, and it's just awesome. They're just really good people."

Paper Swan is a collective of artists and musicians who support each other through live events and posting their performances on the web through their website, paperswan.com. Effectively they are their own audience, which is not to negate what they do. They are dedicated skilled musicians and artists. These are people who take their craft seriously.

They had four acts on the bill. This made for a diverse experience.

Andrew Finn McGill seemed uneasy and shy at first when speaking to the audience but once he took up the violin - or fiddle, as he called it - he was on another plane. He spoke about growing up on traditional Irish music before playing some wonderful ballads and jigs. For me, it was welcome reminder of my homeland. His rendition of the jazzy "Have you met Ms. Jones" was the weakest of his set, but being experimental this could be forgiven. It didn't quite work. He quickly regained his form playing a pop number, which turned to him rapping with the violin.

He had warned us it could get funky. It did, and it was brilliant. "I have to play with my eyes closed so every time I finish a song and open my eyes, you have grown exponentially," he told the audience. He finished with a celebratory ballad called "The Littlest Doyle" written for a friend and collaborator on the birth of his daughter. A fitting end to an excellent set.

Matt Marble took to the stage with a collaborator from his band "Shark Sleep." While they tuned up their instruments, it was impossible to tell who Matt Marble was. All became clear when they started to play. Matt had recruited his bandmate, Jim Altieri, to accompany him on accordion and violin. "Zuccotti Park (In the Dark)" is a great track with Marble's voice resonating around the theatre and Altieri's violin moaning like a ungreased park swing warning us that they're gonna bring the dark. Marble has a powerful voice that pierces the night air and coupled with eerie tones of his guitar. Altieri's violin seemed to lend itself to some nightmarish otherworldly sound that evoked chills throughout the set. Or maybe it was that bust of Johan Sebastian Bach who eerily stared at me no matter where I sat in the audience.

### Wes Anderson

The Trevor Wilson Vocal Ensemble could easily be the subject of a Wes Anderson movie. It's difficult to categorize them as they sounded like an experimental indie project sung by technically classically trained singers. The quirky quintet of singers with complementing voices both harmonized beautifully, simultaneously creating dissonance, signifying chaos and disorder in their world. The lyrics were like poetry set to music, the musings of youth looking on the world with childlike innocence. My favorite, "Magic Donkey", had an ambiguous vibe to it with the ensemble sounding like kids playing in a toy room, but with a dissonance in the tempo and harmony conveying a dark meaning, possibly the loss of innocence. The ensemble switched lead vocal duties with the same frequency the instruments changed hands during their set.



Jim Altieri also accompanied singer Matt Marble on accordion

The final band to take to the stage was Free Advice, an original folk bluegrass trio. Travis Stewart played banjo and shared vocals with Bailey Rayne, while

### Andrew Finn McGill Matt Marble The Trevor Wilson Vocal Ensemble Free Advice

Jalopy Theater, 315 Columbia Street  
September 27th, 2012

Paper Swan returns to Jalopy on October 25th.



The Trevor Wilson Vocal Ensemble, well trained quirky musicians

Ben Engel played snare drum and mandolin. These guys played with a passion as if their life depended on it. They had a crisp, clear sound and flow that was both urgent and laconic. Their musicianship was impeccable. Their songs were infectious. It has been a long time since I got so excited by a band. But this is a group I want to see again and again. Between songs, Travis and Ben built an easy relationship with the audience, bantering with each other from everything from the house's bill of fare to the fact that the barman had briefly abandoned his post and the bar could

be relieved of some of its liquid stock. They were always quick to get back to the order of business and kept great tune after tune coming at their attentive audience. I particularly liked their track "Maine," a lament about the longing for a place, no more acutely felt with the echoing plea to be buried there.

After his set I spoke again to Travis Stewart who was clearly happy how the night went. "I think Red Hook is like what Bushwick could become. There is a community of artists down here and it is so vibrant. That's what the Jalopy Theater has done for Red Hook."



Free Advice played original folk bluegrass.

Paper Swan is a Brooklyn-based production collective whose mission is to build a community of artists through events, provide a forum for ideas, help friends network, and create web and video content. Photos and videos from the night reviewed above can be seen at their website, [www.paperswan.com](http://www.paperswan.com).